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ABSTRACT

The essays in this special issue of The Civic Arts Review address three fundamental issues concerning civic education: clarifying the meaning given to the word citizen; the nature of a liberal democratic political community; and (given diversity and pluralism), how educators can cultivate civic-mindedness and communal responsibility. An introductory editorial, "Foundations of Citizenship Education" (Bruce Jennings), notes the importance of political and ethical theory that must underlie civic education. David Johnston, in "Individualism and Civic Virtue," looks at the political framework and offers four specific suggestions on how higher education could improve democratic citizenship. "Civic Education and Community Service", by Benjamin R. Barber, summarizes principles identified by the Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy at Rutgers University. The next essay, "Civic Education, Liberal Education, and Democracy" (Donald Moon), examines the role of technical expertise, the objectives of liberal education, the nature of democratic discourse, and the content of civic education. "Education for the Common Good" (William M. Sullivan), discusses the concept of the common good within the context of civic politics and civic deliberation. A back page commentary, "Coming to Terms with the Multiculturalists" (Larry McGehee), proposes that active dialogue can create a new multicultural "tradition". (JB)

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Vol. 4, Nos. 1-2, Winter-Spring 1991

The Civic Arts Review

A JOURNAL RELATING LIBERAL EDUCATION AND PUBLIC LIFE

A Special Issue

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON CIVIC EDUCATION

Benjamin Barber **David Johnson**
Bruce Jennings **Donald Moon**
William Sullivan

Plus

Larry McGehee on "Coming To Terms With the Multiculturalists"

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Editorial

FOUNDATIONS OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

(Guest editorial by Bruce Jennings, Executive Director of the Hastings Center in Briarcliff Manor, New York.)

Civic education is education for responsible citizenship. As such it cannot be understood or planned cogently unless its inherently normative foundations and objectives are well understood. Discussions of civic education go nowhere when they are limited solely to matters of pedagogic technique or curriculum content. Yet achieving consensus on the normative foundations of civic education is as difficult as it is important; the very idea (and ideal) of responsible citizenship in our liberal democratic society is highly ambiguous and much contested.

The essays in this issue were written in conjunction with a research project on the foundations of civic education conducted by The Hastings Center with support from the Exxon Education Foundation. In the project three fundamental questions were addressed, which form a subtext for these papers.

The first important task is to clarify the capacities, dispositions and sensibilities to which we do and should give the name citizen. What are its underlying moral psychology, its characteristic mode of agency, and its requisite sense(s) of self? Is citizenship best understood as a bundle of individual rights, or as the practice of certain distinctive political and moral virtues? To mark this difference, and others closely related to it, it may be useful to distinguish between a *civil* conception of citizenship, drawn largely from the liberal tradition of political theory, and a *civic* conception of citizenship, drawn from either the republican or the participatory democratic traditions.

The second question involves the nature of a liberal democratic political community. Competing conceptions of citizenship are usually advanced in order to restore, sustain, or create anew a certain type of *civitas* in the contemporary world. Within a political community how are the proper boundaries to be drawn between public commitments and private interests, and between individual rights and liberties and civic obligations? Differing conceptions of human flourishing and the most basic values a political community ought to serve lead to differing norms for the relationships among citizens, and to differing virtues citizens ought to exhibit in the practice of their citizenship. Here again a civil conception will go in a different direction from a civic conception. The civil conceptions will tend to emphasize respect for autonomy, fairness, and a sense of justice; the civic conception will tend to be more mindful of the forging, through deliberative and communal activities, of a sense of common purpose.

Finally, we must ask, particularly in a pluralistic society, which desperately needs to be able to respect diversity without succumbing to fragmentation, how far should educators go in attempting to cultivate the qualities of civic-mindedness and a sense of communal responsibility in their students? Can civic education successfully walk the razor's edge between a cynical debunking of our political institutions and values, on the one side, and an uncritical and even anti-intellectual patriotism or partisan ideology on the other?

Many years ago John Schaar posed this question with exquisite sharpness when he pleaded for a differentiation between patriotism and nationalism, which he called "patriotism's bloody brother." Events in the Persian Gulf, and in Central Europe too, demonstrate how far we have yet to go in sorting this out. The papers presented here take us more than a few steps in the direction of greater clarity and a greater appreciation for the fundamental issues of political and ethical theory that must underlie curriculum planning and development in civic education. These thoughtful papers remind us that civic education is no idle academic fad or exercise. It is a risky but absolutely necessary business; it goes to the heart of what we are about as educators in a democratic society where citizens, rather than subjects, live. □

INDIVIDUALISM AND CIVIC VIRTUE

David Johnston

Higher education in the United States today is primarily a training ground for participation in the economic life of the society as a whole. In all universities a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the transmission of technical and quasi-technical skills designed to prepare students to perform certain relatively well-defined tasks. Even in the humanities the training students receive is often highly technical. From the standpoint of society one of the central functions of the university is to supply a steady stream of freshly-minted entrants into the labor force with the credentials necessary to take their places within an established division of labor. The university is, and has come to be seen as, one component in society's system of production as a whole.

In this capacity as a supplier of goods, higher education promotes individualism, a trait that is valued highly in market systems like the one which prevails in the United States. The American system of production has perennially been individualistic and meritocratic. For motivation this system relies upon the desires of individuals to maintain or improve their well-being and status. Accordingly, the individual is regarded as the appropriate unit through which to distribute economic rewards and punishments. The individual is also considered the appropriate unit through which to organize participation in the system of exchange, particularly in the market for labor. Thus from an exchange or market point of view, any quality or characteristic possessed by an individual confers a specific bargaining advantage (or disadvantage) upon that person. All of a person's qualities – from relatively diffuse personality characteristics to highly specific skills – are potentially capable of having an impact upon that person's value as a commodity.

In market systems of this kind, two qualities of character in particular tend to attract rewards. First, individuals are rewarded for possessing a high estimation of their own *agency*, i.e. of their efficacy as social actors, their ability to cause things to happen. Individuals who believe that they are effective social actors are far more willing to expend effort than are those who lack faith in their capacity to produce results, and this willingness to exert oneself is generally rewarded. In this respect belief in oneself (in the sense of believing that one is an effective agent) tends to be self-fulfilling. It also helps keep the wheels turning in a system of production that depends for motivation upon the desire to get ahead. Second, individuals are rewarded for formulating and sticking with a clearly defined set of ends or goals, i.e. for achieving what psychologists call a high degree of personal *integration*. This quality serves at least two distinct purposes. It assists individuals in acquiring skills that can prove valuable in the labor market. By focusing upon a clearly defined set of goals individuals are enabled to operate more efficiently in pursuit of these goals and to waste less time than they otherwise would if they were not highly directed. It also confers bargaining advantages directly, since an agent who knows precisely what he or she wants ordinarily possesses an advantage over one who has a less clearly defined set of goals.

Like most other educational institutions in American society (and perhaps more so than many of them), universities promote these qualities. The individual student alone bears the responsibility for his or her academic performance, and academic rewards and punishments are distributed on a strictly individualistic basis. Students are encouraged to think of themselves as the possessors of great power over at least their own academic and future careers. They are also encouraged to achieve a clear sense of their goals. In this sense the universities' role in preparing students for economic life extends well beyond the provision of specific vocational or pre-professional skills. By instilling a sense of agency and encouraging personal integration, the universities help create persons with a sense of direction and a penchant for achievement – persons whose characters are designed for economic success in a market society. This character-shaping aspect of the training university students receive might be called the psychotechnics of individualism.

David Johnson is professor of Political Science at Columbia University.

The Political Framework

The economic life with which universities have gradually become so closely intertwined is not self-sufficient, however. Economic activities take place within a political framework, and more specifically within the framework of a particular polity or *civitas*. In the United States this polity is a constitutional democracy. How does the individualism upon which our market society depends affect the political life of our constitutional democracy? Do the psychotechnic pressures which contribute to market individualism also produce good citizens?

One prominent conception of citizenship in a liberal, pluralist society suggests that the answer to this question is yes. In a series of recent writings the philosopher John Rawls has sketched a model of a "moral person" whose qualities, he believes, make that person appropriate for citizenship in a constitutional democracy. Such a person, he argues, would possess, and would wish to develop as highly as possible, two "moral powers": the capacity for an effective sense of justice and the capacity to form, to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of the good. For Rawls, good democratic citizens are those who understand and abide by the rules of the game. When conflicts arise, good democratic citizens will resolve their disputes through procedures designed to give fair weight to the interests of all involved parties. The basic intuitive idea upon which this conception of citizenship rests is that of society as a fair system of cooperation between free and equal persons. Rawls believes that individualists make good citizens as long as they maintain a keen sense of fairness – in other words, as long as they allow others all the opportunities and resources to pursue their own conceptions of the good that they claim for themselves.

The central difficulty with this view of citizenship is that it assumes that citizens *qua* citizens should abstain from attempting to determine or influence one another's ends. Citizens should regard one another with respect. For Rawls, this means that they should respect one another's conceptions of the good, whatever these may be, rather than attempting to change those conceptions. In this respect social cooperation as Rawls conceives it resembles a market system. In such a system the goals of the participants are regarded as given by the objective of economic success, and their participation in the system is a means through which to pursue these predetermined ends. In Rawls's conception of social cooperation, the ends of the participants are given by their conceptions of the good, whatever these may be, and their participation in the system is viewed as a means through which to achieve these ends. In effect, social cooperation for Rawls is a game in which players engage in order to advance their particular conceptions of the good and in which conflicts over ends are adjudicated by procedures designed to resolve those conflicts fairly without calling the legitimacy

"The training in individualism that prepares us so well for participation in the economic life of a market society contributes little toward the qualities required to engage in political activities well, and in some respects it detracts from our capacity for excellence in them. End-defining activites require political imagination. Creativity, intellectual playfulness, receptivity to new ideas, and a willingness to speculate are among the qualities that contribute most to the capacity to specify and redescribe our own ends as well as those of others. The arts of speculation and persuasive discourse form the specific skills most useful for the purpose of defining and redefining ends. In American higher education today these arts languish, at least by comparison with the attention that is bestowed upon disciplines and approaches that are thought to contribute toward the preparation of students for economic life."

or appropriateness of the players' ends into question. Rawls's conception of citizenship is rooted in an idea of social cooperation that assumes that the participants' conceptions of the good are their own private affair and are *not* matters of public concern.

As a guide to the activities appropriate for citizens in a constitutional democracy, this model of social cooperation is seriously inadequate. Consider the following situation. (I borrow this illustration from Carol Gilligan, who borrowed it from Anne Glickman and relayed it in her article "Remapping the Moral Domain: New Images of the Self in Relationship," in Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery, eds., *Reconstructing Individualism*, Stanford University Press, 1986, pp. 237-252.) Two four-year-old children are playing together and want to play different games: the girl suggests playing next-door-neighbors, while the boy proposes that they play pirates. One solution to the dilemma posed by these conflicting proposals would be for the two children to take turns playing both games. This solution would be fair in Rawls's sense. It would allow each child to pursue his or her end (playing the stipulated game with the other child) with resources equal to those available to the other child (i.e. for equal lengths of time). It would respect the ends of the two players in the sense that it would call neither player's ends into question, but would simply divide the available resources between the two players in equal measure.

Suppose, however, that one of the players suggests a different solution. Instead of taking turns, the players could combine the two proposed games into one, say, by playing pirates that are next door neighbors. This solution would not be *un*fair, of course, but it would require both players to revise the ends which, by conflicting with one another, gave rise to the dilemma in the first place. Instead of taking these ends for granted and attempting to accommodate each fairly, discussion would focus upon their transformation.

In the first of these two solutions, the situation of the two four-year-olds is approached as a coordination game. Given this approach, the criterion of a good solution is fairness. In the second solution, however, the situation is approached as an end-defining activity. The solution incorporates elements from each player's initial proposal while transforming both players' objectives.

In a constitutional democracy both these approaches to the solution of conflict are necessary. Many disputes can best be resolved through a fair adjudication of claims that leaves the ends of the parties involved unquestioned. But not all disputes are best resolved through this kind of fair adjudication. Human beings are capable of adopting a virtually unlimited range of conceptions of the good. Some such conceptions are intrinsically destructive either of those who hold them or of other persons. When some of their fellow members hold intrinsically destructive conceptions of the good, the citizens of a constitutional democracy have an interest in and a responsibility to attempt to transform those conceptions. Moreover, some constellations of conceptions of the good are dangerously volatile not because any one conception is inherently destructive, but because two or more conceptions are implacably opposed to one another. When peaceful coexistence between conflicting conceptions of the good is not possible, democratic citizens should attempt to transform one or more of the opposing conceptions until a condition of mutual toleration and forbearance (at least) is achieved. Citizenship in a constitutional democracy requires more than a willingness to engage in fair social cooperation. It requires, additionally, a capacity and willingness to engage in political activities of an end-defining sort.

Yet the training in individualism that prepares us so well for participation in the economic life of a market society contributes little toward the qualities required to engage in these activities well, and in some respects it detracts from our capacity for excellence in them. End-defining activities require political imagination. Creativity, intellectual playfulness, receptivity to new ideas, and a willingness to speculate are among the qualities that contribute most to the capacity to specify and redescribe our own ends as well as those of others. The arts of speculation and persuasive discourse form the specific skills most useful for the purpose of defining and redefining ends. In American higher education today, these arts languish, at least by comparison with the attention that is bestowed upon disciplines and approaches that are thought to contribute toward the preparation of students for economic life. That preparation places a premium upon the sense of agency and the achievement of personal integration in the form of a well-defined structure of ends. These qualities discourage receptivity and speculation in favor of clarity of purpose and determination. In so doing, they diminish our capacities as democratic citizens to engage in those end-defining activities which, in asking us to reconsider our ends or conceptions of the good, entail a risk of disorder within the self.

What should be done to revive the skills and capacities necessary for excellence in democratic citizenship in a world of flawed and conflicting conceptions of the good? The first observation to be made is that the basic institutions of market society are likely to remain with us for a long time. It would be foolish to imagine that the individualism with which these institutions have long been associated is likely to be eradicated or suppressed at any time in the foreseeable future. Besides, the economic and other advantages that accrue in market societies are considerable. Even if it were possible to do so, it would be a grave mistake to throw these advantages out the window in the hope that doing so might help us to recapture a way of life dominated by political activity (if indeed such a way of life has ever existed).

Nevertheless, there is a genuine tension between the incentives and pressures associated with the desire to succeed in economic life and those which would be needed to create democratic citizens capable of excelling in end-defining activites. Fortunately, the human inclinations to explore, to create, and to speculate are highly resilient. Even imaginative openness to novel ideas and a willingness to place one's ends (and to the extent to which it is defined by one's ends, one's identity) at risk have not been and are not likely to be extinguished by the psychotechnics of individualism. These inclinations and capacities will have to be cultivated if constitutional democracies are to maintain the considerable capabilities for resolving political problems they have often demonstrated in the past. But they will have to be cultivated against long odds. Educators will have to resist constant and insistent pressures to complete the trend toward a remaking of the universities into producers of economic goods in the form of skilled workers.

In view of these obstacles, the first and probably most difficult step to take toward a revival of the skills and capacities of democratic citizenship is to persuade a significant portion of American society of the importance of these civic capacities. This task is best approached in a direct and matter-of-fact manner. Rather than claiming that we are in the throes of a crisis (a twenty-year moratorium on the use of this word would be highly beneficial to our public discourse), advocates of democratic citizenship should call their readers' (and listeners') attention to the political resources upon which constitutional democracy depends. Constitutional democracy in the United States has *not* suffered irreparable damage from the current neglect of civic capacities, but the ability of our institutions to adapt and transform themselves in the long term has declined as our laudable inclination to tolerate diversity has hardened into the prejudice that individuals' conceptions of the good are inviolable and that any attempt to tamper with these conceptions must involve the transgression of a basic right. Conceptions of the good are, in general, legitimate objects of public concern. Diversity should be tolerated – indeed, it can be argued persuasively that a great deal of diversity is essential for a good life in a society as large, as mobile, and as innovative as ours. But conceptions of the good that are intrinsically destructive or violently opposed to one another should not be considered beyond the bounds of public concern or immune to the workings of public authority. A democracy that is denied the right and responsibility to regard its citizens' conceptions of the good as matters of public concern is a democracy whose capacity to adapt has been crippled.

The Role of Higher Education

Within the institutions of higher education in particular, a variety of measures might be taken. I shall make four specific suggestions (in an appropriately speculative spirit).

First, take steps to revive interest in the art of persuasion. Interest in this area has been declining more or less steadily ever since the seventeenth century, when Descartes helped to redefine logic as an art of thinking (rather than an art of discourse) and to establish its ascendancy in prestige over rhetoric. In that century the scientific and popular successes of thinkers like Galileo and Newton began to be regarded as effective proofs of the superiority of logic over other arts. At the same time other writers, such as the English philosopher and polemicist Thomas Hobbes, began to portray the art of rhetoric as a tool of manipulation and deceit, devoid of serious intellectual content but dangerous in its capacity to provoke ordinary people into subversive or even incendiary political action. This devaluation of the art of rhetoric continues to work its effects today. A symptomatic example of these effects within the universities is the fact that departments of rhetoric, which flourished into the early years of the present century, have now all but disappeared.

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But persuasion should be seen as a major *and commendable* aspect of academic activity. Few people today would deny the existence and perhaps even the prevalence of persuasive discourse within academic life. Most, however, regard engagement in this kind of discourse as at best a necessary evil, which diverts valuable time and energies away from more substantive academic pursuits. Indeed, it no longer occurs to more than a handful of faculty members in any university that they occupy a role as civic educators as well as being research workers and transmitters of specialized knowledge to new generations. An appreciation of this role and of the value of persuasive discourse should be revived.

Second, renew a sense of the continuity between written and oral discourse. The technology of written communication has had considerable success in imposing the same abstract quality upon our discursive arts that Descartes was able to impose upon the art of logic over three hundred years ago. We frequently ask our students to write as if they were addressing an abstract Examiner of no known identity or inclination. One thing that is lost in this method of teaching is a sense of the contingency and particularity of all communication, an ability to assess the character, inclinations, and prejudices of the audience to which our communications are addressed and to frame our arguments accordingly.

Two very diverse signs of this tendency within the universities might be worth mentioning. The first is the rather ghostly character of most philosophical writing, even in moral and political philosophy. Moral and political philosophers frequently imagine that it is their business to construct proofs of ethical and political truths analogous to those proferred by theoreticians of mathematics, and more often than not their argumentative language reflects this conception of their task. A second sign of this tendency is the decline of the oral exam. Even the oral defense of doctoral dissertations, which was once almost universally considered an integral and culminating aspect of professional academic training, has been dropped in many universities.

Third, develop and encourage group projects and allocate responsibility for these projects to the group as a whole. Although a good deal of the instruction that goes on in American universities takes place in groups, the evaluation of students' work is almost entirely individualized. It is interesting to note that probably the greatest deviation from this pattern of purely individual responsibility occurs in the "hard" sciences, in large part because of the exigencies imposed by the technology of laboratory experimentation. It is arguable that the perceived success of American scientific education owes something to the academic community's flexibility with regard to the design and the assessment of scientific projects.

Putting this somewhat marginal academic experience to one side, in our society the notion that rights and responsibilities belong to individuals alone and never to groups has very deep roots. The biological individual is our preferred unit of human agency. This means that we tend to ascribe causality as well as rights and responsibilities to individuals: when we attempt to understand human events we usually ask first about the intentions and actions of individuals. Social scientists are well aware of the inadequacy of this kind of reductionism, but our everyday life and thought as well as our moral philosophy is dominated by it.

A consequence of this neglect is that the skill with which we perform the social function of clarifying and defining ends is diminished. We can begin to revive this skill by reacquainting students with the notion that groups sometimes have responsibilities too.

Fourth, ask students to devote a greater portion of their time and energies to exercises in problem-solving, especially of a social kind. The capacities and skills necessary for excellence in democratic citizenship include the skill of judgment in complex decision-making circumstances and an appreciation of the limitations as well as the possibilities of human invention. These skills can best be cultivated through practice, including practice of the kind that might be integrated into a curricular structure.

Faculties in more traditional academic departments might find that in this area they have some things to learn from their colleagues in business and some professional schools, where courses devoted to problem-solving are relatively common, but only if they prove willing to soften their accustomed prejudice for comparatively abstract theoretical knowledge over the less elegant forms of practical knowledge these courses usually attempt to convey. Unlike business school courses, however, the courses in question here should be politically oriented in the specific sense that they should be (or require) exercises in problem-solving that involve the clarification and, when necessary, the redefinition of ends. In business school settings, students generally are told what ends they are to pursue (or "maximize") when they are given problems to solve. The issues they are asked to address, though complex,

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concern only the means by which those stipulated ends can best be attained. Courses in *political* problem-solving should encourage students to rethink the ends to be achieved as well as the means by which those ends should be pursued.

Conclusion

Constitutional democracy is a pragmatic, problem-solving institution. Among its most important functions are the adjudication of claims generated when conflicts arise among its members and the specification or clarification and definition of ends. The first of these two functions can be performed well enough by individuals, that is by persons who possess a keen or even an exaggerated sense of themselves as agents and whose ends are so well-defined that they are relatively insulated from the influence of others, as long as these individualists are able and willing to abide by rules of the game. But individualism of this kind diminishes the capacity to engage in end-defining political activities. Unless the capacities for openness, receptivity, and intellectual playfulness and the skills involved in speculation and persuasive discourse come to be valued and cultivated more assiduously then they are today, the ability of our constitutional democracy to specify and define ends will continue to diminish, and the American republic will gradually lose its sense of direction.

Perhaps the most powerful political image in the United States today is that of the American founding. It is symptomatic of our current condition that our mythology of that event is dominated by the presence of individuals – Washington, Madison, and Jefferson among others – who seem larger than life. But the constitutional convention was an exercise in practical problem-solving that involved a mixture of coordination, game-like, and end-transforming solutions. The men who invented these solutions were prominent citizens, but they were not superhuman. They were, however, educated differently from the way in which, by and large, we educate democratic citizens, including future leaders, today. They were well acquainted with works of classical literature, history, and political philosophy. They were also accustomed, at least by the time of the convention, to political and other projects undertaken in groups, and to the sense of collective responsibility that flows from this kind of involvement. We should emulate their imagination, their creativity, and their political skills if we wish to preserve our constitutional democracy in the face of the challenges and dangers that are sure to arise during the third century of its existence.

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CIVIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Benjamin R. Barber

American education is once again in crisis – if we dare use a word that connotes something special to depict a chronic condition. Reflecting the values of the society around them, students have become increasingly narrow, vocational and materialistic in their attitude towards what once passed as liberal arts education. The fierce economic competitiveness of the times has exacerbated racial tensions (around issues like affirmative action), and created a climate of antagonism that many educators predicted could not recur in the modern (post-civil-rights-revolution) university.

Some elite universities wage a seemingly futile battle with resurgent sexism, antisemitism and racism, while state universities watch a fraternity system that almost disappeared in the seventies once again become the redoubt of distorted exclusionary values, anti-intellectualism and alcoholism. Illiteracy of the cultural, civic and just plain skills variety is rife enough to fuel a score of best sellers that for the most part blame the young for their own debilities.

All of this takes place within a larger society devoted to wealth, celebrity and privatism, where public values and civic commitments are barely perceptible. It is hardly a wonder that the idea of citizenship finds no home either in our schools and universities or our society. Or that students can think of military service, altruism or programs of community service as "encroachments" on "rights" which they wholly dissociate from the political and civic contexts of responsibility and duty that give rights their meaning. Rights talk has in fact become the preferred form of egoism, with every "I want" now embedded in a rhetoric of "it is my right to have" without regard to the political conditions that alone make rights talk viable.

Benjamin Barber directs the Whitman Center at Rutgers University and is the author of Strong Democracy.

It has traditionally been the aim of civic education to foster public thinking, civic values, a sense of community responsibility and the arts of citizenship, and thus to associate duties with power, and rights with responsibility. However, because our understanding of citizenship has been ambiguous and conflicted – for many, a matter of occasional voting and a rhetoric of rights, but little else – civic education has often been little more than a quick course in patriotism (what it means to be an "American") laced with some homilies on the importance of getting to the polls. And even this thin form of civic education seems to have largely disappeared in our secondary schools and colleges.

Is there then a program in civic education fit for the political infelicities of the 1990s when political campaigns have not only ceased to educate the public but have become exercises in manipulation, misdirection and misinformation? Is there something more than a refresher course in mindless patriotism available to schools wishing to confront the pedagogical and civic crises of our privatized times? How can civics be taught in a nation whose civic domain has nearly vanished and where the glowing tube is as close as most of us come to participation?

At Rutgers University, the newly founded Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy has taken on the challenge of developing concrete forms of civic education that answer to the vital questions raised here. Our first line of attack has been to contemplate the possible role of community service as the foundation for a civic arts education for all undergraduates. We have developed in the course of our exploration thus far a set of premises which we believe must undergird any effective program in civic education and community service. The following points summarize what we think we have learned thus far:

1) We are convinced that to teach the art of citizenship is to practice it – so that teaching in this domain must be about acting and doing as well as about listening and

learning. Yet at the same time, it must afford an opportunity for reflecting on and discussing what is being done. This suggests the desireability of thinking about civic education in terms of a required *practikum* – civic activity such as community service at the core of a study and action program. It also suggests, however, the importance of having a classroom setting within which to discuss and evaluate the *practikum*, and relate it to larger questions of the civic polity.

2) We have been persuaded also that the crucial democratic relationship between rights and responsibilities – which have been largely divorced in our privatized rights-addicted society – may perhaps best be made visible in the setting of citizen service where people express their membership in a community by serving its public needs. Students (as well as faculty and administrators) often take for granted both the community character of the institution they find themselves in, and the relationship of that narrow community to the surrounding town, county and region. A useful way to reveal the connection of individuals to these invisible communities is to ask students to participate in service activities – ideally not just as individuals but in small groups or teams that emphasize their relationship to one another. Getting students to express their membership in communities is absolutely crucial in educating the young for citizenship.

3) It would seem to follow from the above that communities are interdependent in a fashion that makes the segregation and isolation of schools and colleges from the communities within which they exist both foolish and misleading to students. This suggests that colleges may themselves need to reassess their relationship to the communities in which they reside, particularly in terms of the traditional notion of the "ivory tower" and to offer students a model of responsibility towards and membership in the world beyond their walls.

4) We suspect that antisocial, discriminatory and other forms of selfish or abusive or addictive behavior may all be, at least in part, so many symptoms of civic alienation and the breakdown of those social communities in which individuals feel they have a stake. To the degree this is true, behaviours of this kind are likely to be remediated only through a reconstruction of the educational community as an association of mutually responsible agents. It may be that the narrow sectarian approach to these problems on a case by case basis so often taken by university administrators needs to be supplemented by a focus on the integrity and vitality of the civic community within which the problems actually arise.

5) We believe that respect for the full diversity and plurality of American life is possible only when students have an opportunity to interact with one another in non-academic settings as well as in the classroom, in places where they *do* together as well as where they study together (sports are a good example of how successful this can be). Community service projects, particularly where they involve a team approach, may afford exactly this kind of setting for student relationships that is neither strictly social nor strictly academic.

6) As a number of the above points demonstrate, it would seem that students learn both citizenship and service best when working together collaboratively in teams or small groups where they can begin to see themselves as more than solitary, private individuals with only private goals and aims. If atomism and selfishness are built into much of American life, forms of community service organized around small groups that both work and study together, taking common responsibility for their service projects, may offer an offsetting experience of particular significance.

7) Based on our observations of participation in American life, we conclude that membership in a community entails responsibilities and duties which are likely to be felt as genuine and binding only to the degree individuals feel *empowered* in the community. As a consequence, empowerment must be a necessary part of any program of civic education and community service. What this means is that universities serious about engaging their students in community service need to think seriously about the issues of empowerment. This may mean simply empowering students to help create and administer community service projects, or it may mean reconsidering their role on other university committees. Lecturing students on their responsibilities to a community in which they are given no creative, participatory role, will be immediately seen as a particularly noxious form of hypocrisy by students; and while it is clear that there are many aspects of university life where control cannot be devolved on students, there are others where student participation is both fitting and desirable, and where it could help to justify the idea of community service as an integral feature of a liberal education.

8) We conclude then that the tasks of civic education require a major reexamination of the curriculum and requirements of liberal arts education that goes far beyond the introduction of specific courses or programs. Since the deep priorities of higher education are implicated in a commitment to make education for service and citizenship an integral part of the educational mission of colleges and universities, a service program obviously cannot be considered, let alone introduced, in isolation from the broad question of what a college education ought to look like *in toto*. If community service is to be an effective tool of civic education, it will have to be integrated into the educational life of the university and viewed as a vital aspect of college life.

Beginning with these working premises, the Whitman Center has taken the extraordinary vision expressed by President Edward Bloustein of Rutgers in his commencement address in 1988, (a vision that has been vigorously endorsed by Board of Governors chairman Michael Bongiovanni) and initiated a campus wide discussion of the

idea of community service – one that involves students, faculty, administration and representatives of the wide community of which the university is a part. In his commencement address, President Bloustein warned that despite appearances, "the bitter fact is that racism, sexism, homophobia, religious intolerance, fear of and animosity toward foreigners, and such other forms of provincialism are still very much with us." At the same time, Bloustein noted: "the naked pursuit of individual interest and material gain (which are so much a part of modern life) are a hopelessly inadequate source of personal satisfaction ... as well as a dangerously obtuse response to the global condition in which we find ourselves."

"Students can think of military service, altruism or programs of community service as 'encroachments' on 'rights' which they wholly dissociate from the political and civic contexts of responsibility and duty that give rights their meaning."

Bloustein went on to propose "making community service to others a requirement of the undergraduate liberal arts degree." His proposal has now become one of the founding missions of the Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy, which is in the process of developing a concrete plan for a community service program with appropriate academic (seminar) and practical service components as a graduate requirement for all students at the university – a program that might serve as a model both for secondary schools, colleges and universities, and perhaps even the nation at large (a national citizen service program). We envision every single undergraduate student spending a certain amount of his or her time participating in community service – and in a seminar where such service is explored, evaluated and related to large issues of tolerance, equality, civic responsibility and the nature of democracy. We also expect that the implementation of this program will require a thorough reexamination of the univerity's curricular priorities, it fiscal and time management, and its relationship to students. Naturally such changes are only possible with the collaboration of students and faculty and with formal approval by the appropriate faculty governing bodies.

There is today sufficient consternation over the state of education and the condition of the civic polity in America to attract to the idea of community service a great deal of new interest and fresh attention. There are already ten states that are experimenting with high school service programs, both voluntary and required, among them California, Connecticut, Minnesota, Montana, and North Carolina. Atlanta high schools now require seventy-five hours of unpaid volunteer service, and a number of school districts throughout the nation have stablished their own local requirements (for details see Kathryn T. Theus' excellent critical survey entitled "Campus Based Community Service," in the September/October 1988, pp. 26-38, issue of *Change* magazine). There is also serious talk in government circles about a national voluntary community service program.

There are, in addition, a number of small private colleges (Alverno, Berea and Mount St. Mary) that have introduced a service requirement, and still others that have experimented with courses on community service and altruism – among them Rice University, which has pioneered a course on "The Needs of Strangers" (the title is from Michael Ignatieff's remarkable book). Organizations like the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) that is student oriented and *Campus Compact* (an organization of university presidents concerned with service) are actively exploring and underwriting service campus programs already in existence, or trying to innovate new programs.

We are well aware of how radical a community service program is: it does quite precisely "go to the roots" of educational policy. We also appreciate the several dangers that are hidden in any proposal that calls for so many basic changes in our academic structures. But we believe the crisis in education calls for significant, even radical, changes. The idea of student community service and, more generally, citizen service offers one of the most promising avenues for remediation of many of the current afflictions in our schools and the wider society. Above all we are persuaded that the fate of democracy depends on the quality of citizenship and civic leadership. Without meaningful programs of civic education democracy may fail for want of both citizens and leaders. □

CIVIC EDUCATION, LIBERAL EDUCATION, AND DEMOCRACY

Donald Moon

Civic education in the college liberal arts curriculum raises a troubling issue for democrats because it may threaten their commitment to equality. In spite of the large numbers of individuals who go on to higher education in America, the vast majority of the citizens of our country do not enter college, let alone complete bachelor degrees. Those who do constitute an elite, a relatively small group who will, over time, come to exercise a disproportionate influence over our public life, and who will enjoy a significant share of the other goods our society makes available to its members. These facts must already be of concern to democrats. Do we not compound the problem by proposing and designing a special program or set of programs in civic education for this elite, a program which may – simply because of its exclusivity – serve to mark off this group further from the rest of the citizenry, and so lead us even further from the democratic ideal?

I would not wish to deny this danger, but I will argue that it is more than counterbalanced by the special contribution that liberally educated men and women can make as citizens to democratic discourse. To the extent that the ideals of liberal education are realized, there will be a large group of individuals who have the skills necessary to harness specialized knowledge to the purposes of democracy. To understand the role of liberally educated citizens in a democracy, we must consider the ways in which the growing importance of technical experts in public life may undermine democratic values, the objectives of liberal education, and the nature of democratic discourse. On the basis of these considerations, we can decide what forms of civic education in the university will contribute to democratic equality, rather than to the privileges of an elite.

Technical Expertise and Democracy

It is a commonplace that the problems we face involve great technical complexities. And the tremendous growth in the scale of government has made the control of the governmental apparatus itself one of the central problems of politics. To address these problems, democracies call into existence, or press into political service, individuals with special training to formulate and implement policies. In many cases, these individuals staff the administration, controlling the day to day implementation of policy, and contribute in key ways to the formulation of new initiatives. In other cases, experts from outside of government are recruited, and they play a key role in defining the terms of public discourse and the alternative courses of action the polity confronts.

That experts must play a central role in our public life is not a matter to be seriously questioned. But it does pose difficult issues for democrats, since it calls into question the ideal of the citizenry deciding the direction of public life. As Weber argued some sixty years ago, because citizens and even full-time, elected officials are in the position of dilettantes vis-a-vis the "specialized officials" who staff government departments and have both the technical knowledge required for their offices, and knowledge of the facts and administrative processes vital to intelligent decision-making, there is a danger that much of the effective power of decision will fall into the hands of these officials. One of the great dangers of our time, Weber argued, in his *Economy and Society*, is the growth of a new kind of despotism, one which is based upon knowledge and the conscious application of rationality to human affairs, which "is busy fabricating the shell of bondage which men will perhaps be forced to inhabit some day, as powerless as the fellahs of ancient Egypt." (Vol. 2, p. 1402)

Weber's nightmare is not, it should be noted, a modern version of Plato's dream, a vision of a state based upon knowledge, and ruled by a genuine elite. For unlike Plato's philosopher-kings, the experts who would rule today are not men and women with a synoptic view of political affairs, and the understanding of what must be done to direct society as a whole to its proper ends. The organization of knowledge today involves a high degree of specialization, and the kind of mastery that qualifies one as an ex-

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pert is necessarily purchased at the price of a certain narrowness. Outside of one's own specific field, the "expert" is as much a dilettante as anyone else. Domination based upon knowledge, then, results not merely in the subversion of democracy, but also in the ossification of politics as different areas of public life come to be effectively controlled by unaccountable experts, without any coordination of their activities in terms of a unified vision.

Specialization and, with it, a certain fragmentation of culture are unalterable features of our world. Recognizing this, some commentators have called for the replacement of democratic politics with some kind of "technocracy," where specialists are empowered to make the increasingly technical decisions regarding public policy, free from the interference of others. Sometimes, this vision is combined with a view of "democracy," in which the "people" are called upon periodically to offer ritualistic legitimations of elite rule through elections. But these "elections" have more the character of plebiscites, occasions for ordinary citizens to affirm their commitment to the regime, rather than an institution through which public discourse comes to be focused, leading to decisions about the shape and direction of public life. (For the argument of this section, and much of this essay, I am indebted to the work of Habermas, particularly his "Technical Progress and the Social Life-World" and "The Scientization of Politics and Public Opinion" in *Towards a Rational Society*.)

"The organization of knowledge today involves a high degree of specialization, and the kind of mastery that qualifies one as an expert is necessarily purchased at the price of a certain narrowness. Outside of one's own specific field, the expert is as much a dilettante as anyone else. Domination based upon knowledge, then, results not merely in the subversion of democracy, but also in the ossification of politics as different areas of public life come to be effectively controlled by unaccountable experts, without any coordination of their activities in terms of a unified vision."

The Objectives of Liberal Education

It is in this context that the liberal arts colleges and universities have an important role to play in sustaining the possibility of democracy. One of the special tasks of liberal education is the reproduction of a common intellectual culture which provides a space within which expert knowledge can be made available to non-specialists (who will include, of course, people with different areas of expertise), and can therefore inform public discourse. This responsibility is reflected in the goals of a liberal education which include breadth of learning, the integration of different areas of knowledge, and the cultivation of practical judgment.

The goals of breadth and integration have been approached in different ways at different times and in different institutions. The most common means are the development of "core" curricula and "general" requirements which obligate students to take courses outside of their areas of concentration. Behind the commitment to liberal learning is the belief that the narrow specialist is impoverished as a human being and that even specialists must be able to locate their discipline in relation to other areas of study. Thus, the liberal arts curriculum is designed to enable students to develop a critical awareness of the modes of inquiry characteristic of different disciplines, and to provide them with an exposure to their central ideas and methods. Ideally, students should develop the skills necessary to understand complex arguments from different domains, to critically assess them, and to restate these arguments in other terms. By creating bridges among discourses based on different assumptions or motivated by different concerns, liberal arts institutions can help to sustain a common intellectual culture, facilitating communication among specialists and providing an opening for all citizens to participate in public life.

The cultivation of practical judgment, the third objective of liberal education mentioned above, has become increasingly problematic in the academy today. Naturally, it is paid a certain symbolic respect, for most will agree that liberal education is not merely an intellectual achievement, but also involves reflection on the ways our knowledge can and should be used. But we have, it appears, become doubtful of the legitimacy, or possibility, of civic education in particular and moral education in general. One reason for this is scepticism regarding the cognitive status of moral and political judgments. This scepticism is widely shared among our students, who are quick to dismiss or relativize "value" judgments as "matters of opinion," or even taste. As they become more sophisticated, the reasons for their scepticism may deepen, but it is seldom challenged. Indeed, the better the education the more likely it is to be reinforced, as more and more of their deepest assumptions are identified and held up to critical

scrutiny. To the extent that liberal education undermines the "naturalness" of traditions, it casts into doubt the very possibility of finding a standpoint from which considered judgments can be made, and so encourages a retreat into subjectivism.

It is often thought (especially, I think, by our students) that democracy itself requires such scepticism regarding practical matters. For isn't it easier to practice the democratic virtues of tolerance, compromise, and respect for others (including their opinions) if we abandon the view that there are right or wrong answers to the questions we face? Don't these virtues themselves rest on scepticism, for why should we tolerate error? And how can we respect it? Sometimes students will even argue that efforts to criticize or challenge a value position are "undemocratic." They feel that it is only because moral and political judgments are matters of "opinion" that everyone's opinions should be counted equally. If it were possible to provide rational grounds for practical knowledge, then it would be one more subject of "expertise," and moral experts, not common citizens, would be the proper rulers. Thus, the very effort to provide rational arguments for practical judgments seems to threaten what they view as an essential presupposition of democracy.

The Nature of Democratic Discourse

This retreat to subjectivism and relativism, however, is ultimately corrosive of democracy itself. In the first place, it undermines the possibility of public discourse. It deprives discourse of seriousness because it means that there can be no expectation of agreement reflecting a rational consensus on issues of public life. Discourse, then, is reduced to the display of opposed positions rather than the consideration of reasons that are intended to convince, not merely sway, an audience. Moreover, this view breeds a certain cynicism, encouraging the development of manipulative attitudes towards others. It supports a view of public life as inherently governed by the play of power and the calculation of interest – of politics reduced to who gets what, when, and how, as Harold Lasswell put it.

The apparent connection between democracy and scepticism rests on a number of errors. One of the most common is the confusion of "value pluralism" with scepticism. Democracy – or, at least, the liberal democracy of the west – rests on a commitment to value pluralism, the belief that there are a diversity of goods, a variety of ways of life that are of genuine worth, enabling people to live full and satisfying lives. These ways of life achieve different ends and require different commitments; it may sometimes be possible to combine them, but there are irresolvable conflicts among them. Sometimes these conflicts are a result of scarcity, as when one must juggle the conflicting demands and commitments of work and family life, or choose to pursue certain forms of excellence over others. But sometimes these conflicts go deeper, as between a religious life of humility and service to others, and a commitment to a form of secular accomplishment that requires a high degree of self-assertion. There can be good reasons for a particular individual to choose one over another, but there is no general way of reconciling or ranking the values and ends when they conflict. As Isaiah Berlin has argued in his essay on "The Concepts of Liberty" in *Four Essays on Liberty*, there is no "final solution" which can transform the diversity of goods into an harmonious order.

It is against the background of value pluralism that we can understand one of the most important functions of public discourse in a democratic society, for it is through public discourse that men and women come to formulate and accept the principles that govern their collective lives. In non-democratic systems, some elite is entrusted with the task of prescribing the rules governing the conduct of members of the society. When they obey these rules, they necessarily subject themselves to the decisions of the elite.

"One of the special tasks of liberal education is the reproduction of a common intellectual culture which provides a space within which expert knowledge can be made available to non-specialists (who will include, of course, people with different areas of expertise), and can therefore inform public discourse. This responsibility is reflected in the goals of a liberal education, which include breadth of learning, the integration of different areas of knowledge, and the cultivation of practical judgment."

Even if they obey willingly, in an important sense they are unfree, because the authority they obey is external to them. The democratic ideal, however, is the creation of a moral community, a community in which the norms determining our common life arise from a process of public discourse in which individuals come to see the point and need for certain rules, and so accept them as binding upon themselves. To the extent that this ideal is realized, social relationships can be based upon *moral* norms, in the sense of norms which all parties to the relationship freely acknowledge because each recognizes them as binding. As such relationships come to displace patterns of interaction based upon unreflecting acceptance of tradition, or the capacity of certain groups or classes to impose their will upon others through force and manipulation, the democratic concept of a free society is realized.

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The democratic ideal, then, envisions the active constitution of a moral community in a context of value pluralism. Given this vision, we can see why tolerance and mutual respect are important democratic values. Further, we can understand why democratic societies are characterized by a commitment to a distinction between the "public" and the "private" realms, and to something like "neutrality" as a principle governing the public sphere. Discourse among individuals who hold different values, but who seek agreement on the norms governing their relationships, obviously rests on tolerance and mutual respect, on a willingness to consider the needs and aspirations of others. And while discourse may sometimes require a direct engagement with, and dispute about, the character of the ends which the parties pursue, very often it will lead to an effort to "bracket" such disagreements. In these cases, participants in the discourse will try to demarcate those areas of social life where individuals may freely pursue their own aspirations, and those where a common set of norms must be observed. And if agreement is to be forthcoming on such norms, it will be necessary that they accord fair consideration to the conflicting values at stake. Neutrality will be an important principle precisely because it articulates the idea that the norms governing our common life must not unduly disadvantage any group in the community in their efforts to promote the ends they have accepted. The concept of neutrality is not, of course, without difficulties but it is central nonetheless.

Thus the bases for the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and the limitations on the scope of political authority are not to be found in any kind of scepticism, but in the ways in which public or moral (or, more generally, practical) discourse is "constructive." The point of such discourse is to enable men and women to "construct" a moral world, so to speak, by discovering those principles of association to which all can subscribe. And the constructive nature of practical discourse also demonstrates why it is not a form of discourse that can be closed to people who do not possess "special" qualifications. Rather, it must be open to all who have the capacity to hold values which give point to their lives, and who are able to act on principles in their relationships with others – that is, to all who have the qualities necessary for moral action and responsibility, or normal adults.

The Content of Civic Education

An important aspect of civic education consists of the traditional liberal arts objectives of breadth and integration of knowledge. Not surprisingly, civic education also requires the cultivation of practical judgment – the third objective of liberal education I mentioned above. In certain respects, the cultivation of practical judgment is as much a part of a traditional understanding of liberal education as it is a part of civic education. The study of norms

and values is the subject of such traditional disciplines as ethics and political theory, and exposure to these concerns should be part of the general education of all students. In particular, we might expect liberal arts graduates to be familiar with some of the most important traditions of moral and political thought, to have seriously confronted questions such as moral relativism and the grounding of moral judgments, the critical analysis of norms and values, the problem of applying general principles to specific cases, and the place of ethical commitments in various branches of scholarship. It would be hard to defend a conception of liberal education today that did not include some attention to the ways in which knowledge might be used in practical life, and the consequences of this for the creation of knowledge itself.

"This retreat to subjectivism and relativism, however, is ultimately corrosive of democracy itself. In the first place, it undermines the possibility of public discourse. It deprives discourse of seriousness because it means that there can be no expectation of agreement reflecting a rational consensus on issues of public life. Discourse, then, is reduced to the display of opposed positions, rather than the consideration of reasons that are intended to convince, not merely sway, an audience."

To a large extent, then, liberal education so conceived *is* civic education. But if liberally educated citizens are to play the distinctive role in democratic discourse I have described, their education should include specific attention to the ways in which specialized knowledge can enter into public life. It is not enough simply to be able to "translate" from one mode of discourse into another, so that ordinary citizens can understand enough to make intelligent judgments. We must also help our students see that there are different ways in which specialized knowledge can be "used" in public affairs. One of the difficulties in attaining this objective is that the academy is deeply divided on this question. The dominant position, represented by students of "policy analysis," conceives of the "application" of knowledge in essentially instrumental terms.

This instrumentalist view of the application of knowledge to practical questions is a powerful one in our culture, tied as it is to the success of the natural sciences in providing the understanding necessary for exerting control over various natural processes. For many years the conception of knowledge on which it is based – the understanding of causal relationships – represented the ideal for the social sciences. Our hope was to develop powerful social theories which could be used to predict and explain social phenomena by setting out the laws which governed them. In this way, public policy informed by these theories could be used to solve or control problems such as unemployment, juvenile delinquency, political instability, and war.

This generalization of a particular conception of knowledge to the social sciences, however, raises special difficulties. For the social sciences are forms of civic discourse. Because their subject is human action, and because the social scientists who construct social theories are also social actors, the social sciences are themselves ways in which we represent ourselves, ways in which we understand our own lives and activities. With an exclusively instrumentalist understanding of knowledge, however, we come to conceive of ourselves and our activities as "objects," whose behavior is determined by specific causal factors which can be manipulated in order to alter "undesirable" behavior and avoid certain outcomes.

This vision of social knowledge supports a particular conception of politics which focusses on the manipulation of causal factors to realize particular objectives. While it does not rule out democracy and public discourse, it constrains them in important ways. The task of democratic politics is to determine what objectives we should realize, what "trade-offs" to make among the various values we hold. While this task can be informed by expert knowledge of the "costs" of various proposals, a process in which liberal arts graduates can play an important role, it represents democratic decisions as essentially the expression of preference, or arbitrary will. And as this vision of public life comes to be widely diffused, and a consensus grows on the kinds of problems we can hope to solve at acceptable cost, the scope for public deliberation decreases, and the place of specialists and technically trained experts increases.

Critics of the instrumentalist model, recognizing its implications for democratic discourse, have often sought to reject it entirely. Social phenomena, they argue, are unlike natural events; they are in part constituted by the concepts and beliefs, by the "self-understandings" of social actors. Actions, for example, have the character they have because they express the beliefs and purposes of the actors. One cannot, for example, be said to "vote" or "obey an order" unless one had certain understandings of what one was doing – unless one saw oneself as making a choice among alternatives, or as subject to some authority.

To represent social activities as if they were merely natural events, objects governed by causal laws, is a deep mistake, for it is to reify the self-understandings that make up a particular form of life, to treat them as if they were necessary, unalterable constituents of the world, when in fact they are rooted in particular forms of social life. Social knowledge, on this account, does not consist of an understanding of the causal laws determining the behavior of certain variables. Rather, it is more akin to interpretations – the meanings of the practices and self-understandings of a particular group at a particular time. And the way in which knowledge can enter into public discourse is not so much by informing its participants as to the possible "trade-offs" among different objectives, but by enlightening them as to the significance of their practices. The relationship of knowledge to practice is not, then, a manipulative or instrumental one, but one that is at least potentially self-transformative. For as citizens come to understand themselves better, they may decide deliberately to alter certain of their practices and the concepts and beliefs which they had previously held in an unself-conscious manner. The entire framework of policy analysis, then, is rejected by these critics in favor of a model of deliberative enlightenment.

Conclusion

Civic education in our colleges and universities should reject the exclusive reliance on either of these extreme models, in favor of some (albeit tension-filled) acceptance of both. The critics of policy analysis are correct in noting that social phenomena are not "objects" in the way that an instrumentalist vision of social science conceives of them, and in pointing to the critical role of actors' self-understandings in constituting the social world. This has now come to be widely appreciated among scientists, and some of the best works of social science are essentially interpretative in nature, works that articulate and clarify the meanings of social practices. By enabling us to understand ourselves better, social science can contribute to reasoned public judgment. And because such social science is ultimately rooted in, and must return to, the language of social actors, it is itself a form of public discourse.

On the other hand, the policy analysts are correct in conceiving of social processes as, in some sense, "objectified." Not everything that *happens* in social life is something that someone (or some group) *does*. We cannot, at least not in general, understand depressions or revolutions or suicide rates or illiteracy simply in terms of the intentions or the self-understandings of social actors. Many of the phenomena which most concern us, and which we must control if we are to determine the direction of our public lives, are the unintended and unanticipated outcomes of actions directed at entirely different (and usually rather modest) ends. The analysis of the causal processes which produce them, and the communication of these analyses to a larger public, is essential if we are to realize the democratic ideal.

Liberal education has a vital role to play in enabling young men and women to make an important contribution to democracy. But it can only play this role if the importance of civic education in the process of liberal learning is recognized, particularly the centrality of what I have called the cultivation of practical judgment. This will require not only the study of the traditional concerns of ethics and political theory, but also specific attention to the social sciences, and the ways in which social knowledge can enter practical life. We should enable students to see the need for an instrumentalist understanding of knowledge, and equip them with the skills to communicate that understanding to a larger public. But we must also avoid the common error of assuming that this is the only way in which knowledge can enter public discourse, and design programs in which social inquiry is itself seen as a form of public discourse. There are many obstacles to the realization of democracy's commitments to politics as a form of human freedom and to equality. A stronger program of civic education in our universities may go some way to realizing both of these commitments. □

EDUCATION FOR THE COMMON GOOD

William M. Sullivan

Earlier in this century Walter Lippmann dramatized the difficulties that an increasingly complex and interdependent social environment presents for democratic citizenship. In his enormously influential book of 1922, *Public Opinion*, Lippmann pointedly criticized the old American ideal of the "omnicompetent citizen." Lippmann argued, in terms which still strike home today, that the relevant external environment has simply grown too extensive and complicated for citizens to be able to grasp. Just as reporting events in this expanding global environment could no longer depend upon informal local gossip but needed the specialized organization of the modern news media, Lippmann argued that real comprehension of events was likewise restricted to groups of specialists. In posing this challenge to democracy Lippmann outlined the problem that a civic education for our times must address.

Approaches to Civic Education

If Lippmann was right about the problem, however, most approaches to civic education leave us poorly equipped to confront it. Too often, the focus is on the individual and individually chosen relationships, with social institutions forming at best a mere background. Taken as common sense, this uncritical individualism obscures the importance of institutions in our lives. Families, schools, religious and occupational groups are more than tools for individual advantage. Individuals depend upon such institutions and are profoundly shaped by them.

Institutions are to our lives what metaphors are for our speech. Through institutions we come to understand ourselves as certain kinds of people related to others in reliable ways. Through them we also learn patterns of relationship which can be extended much as metaphors increase the range of meaning. Political terms such as fraternity or sisterhood, for example, ask us to see strangers as though they shared family ties with us and call upon us to treat them accordingly. Again like metaphors, institutions lead us to recognize ideals and possibilities even when these exceed actual experience. Fraternity asks us to treat others not as we in fact treat kin, but as we know they should be treated. In these ways, institutions are essential for personal as well as collective flourishing. They make trust possible and provide the context for responsibility.

Because it does not recognize this fact, individualism cannot provide an adequate understanding of social life. However, an individualistic focus is consonant with philosophic liberalism's emphasis upon private interests and individual rights. Because this individualistic liberalism does not readily acknowledge individuals' dependence upon complex interconnections, it renders impossible a conception of civic education adequate to the challenge of the times.

For example, free market "conservatives" – really advocates of 19th century economic liberalism – valorize the individual economic actor as entrepreneur or consumer. These advocates of economic *laissez-faire* are shielded from having to confront invisible complexity of interdependence by their belief that private pursuits will always produce public gains if only the market is allowed to run free. For their part, many who style themselves religious and moral conservatives define the issue of civic education as a problem of individual "character." Such advocates rarely note how insidiously the blandishments of commercialized glamor, and thus the market, work to counteract their influence upon those individuals they would uplift.

By contrast, "liberals" in the contemporary political use of the term, those who stress individual rights, like to emphasize personal empowerment and the questioning of traditional authority. But these advocates of education for self-determination rarely address the issue of the abuses of liberty which worry many citizens. Neither do liberals of this stripe much note the narrow and nasty features of a public realm reduced to the fray of competing interest and claimant groups.

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Despite their differences, all these approaches assume rather than question philosophic liberalism's preponderant influence on the terms of public debate. As a public philosophy, philosophic liberalism stresses the value of individual freedom of choice. It advocates governmental neutrality regarding differing conceptions of the good life. Accordingly, philosophic liberals have often sought to keep discussion of the good life out of the public sphere. This allergy to public affirmations of common values has been historically beneficial when it has served as a defense against the tyranny of enforced religious belief. However, philosophic liberalism has also blinded its adherents to the ways in which liberalism itself represents a distinctive if narrow conception of the good life for all.

The Need For The Common Good

In a society and a world which are growing increasingly interrelated the great need is to devise ways for living amid difference without destructive conflict. A working consensus about some public goods and values is the necessary practical basis on which disagreements can become intelligible. It is also essential for a democracy which aims to guide its life by public deliberation. But these political objectives require an image of politics different from that provided by liberal individualism. The search for the common good as embodied in the notion of public values could meet this need.

A democratic politics of the common good sees public consensus as essential to the realization of goods basic to all other pursuits. This conception does not seek to weaken liberal civil rights. Rather it seeks to expand the liberal understanding in a more social direction. In the perspective of the common good, rights acquire a fuller meaning as those goods required for full participation in social life.

A civic life shaped by the quest for the common good cannot be oriented by the question of what I want, or even what I ought to want as a private individual. These questions are appropriate when individuals are bargaining in the market or when they confront a bureaucratic agency as its clients. But they are not the questions of citizens. Citizens are not only private individuals. They are bearers of the public trust, officers of the commonwealth. For citizens the orienting question is what our common life is to be like, what is appropriate for us to pursue together.

Understanding Civic Politics

Civic education for the common good aims to equip citizens with the capacity for civic deliberation. That is, to carry on discussion of the question first formulated by Aristotle: "Given our circumstances, how ought we to live together?" Despite the prominence of individualism, the American political tradition provides significant precedents we can refer to in reconceiving this task for our time. Particularly at moments of major social reorganization, Americans have formulated a civic understanding of themselves as held together by a common history of struggle to define and realize certain common goods.

The tradition of liberal Progressivism of the early twentieth century provides useful examples of citizenship concerned with the common good. Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, Walter Lippmann and John Dewey come quickly to mind as public figures who proposed a social liberalism focused by questions of the common good. While this tradition of Progressivism has suffered political eclipse, the common intent of its great exponents continues to have relevance for our contemporary situation.

The Progressive thinkers, particularly Dewey, were convinced that the nation's problems were generally misunderstood. For the Progressives, the pervasive individualism of American culture distorted popular vision. An individualistic way of viewing things emphasized certain features of the social situation while it minimized awareness of others. For example, the profits of entrepreneurs and corporations were given great salience, while the need to conserve natural resources was ignored – until Theodore Roosevelt arrived in the White House. Short-term financial gains occupied the foreground in popular thinking while the needs of public health remained indistinct. The Progressive's advocacy of public health and child labor legislation dramatically refocused attention on the kind of society the United States was becoming compared to the kind of nation it could become.

In his public philosophical activity, John Dewey tried to bring to practical awareness this question of what kind of society the nation could – and should – become. Dewey proposed a new way of talking about national life which he thought would provide the basis for discovering the common good through practical deliberation and experiment. Dewey took as his model an ideal community of scientific inquirers, conceiving politics in a parallel way as the search for rational "solutions" to public problems. However, while science for Dewey was of a piece with questions of value, this metaphorical portrayal of politics as an aspiring science did not serve his aims well. The public discovery of solutions to social problems was too easily misunderstood as a search for techniques for efficiently delivering private goods.

Knowing the disappointing outcome of Dewey's own project, we might more profitably conceive of what he and other Progressives were trying to do in a different way. We can reformulate Dewey's notion of politics by analogy to the public conversation Mary Ann Glendon finds in the recent European debates over family law in her *Abortion And Divorce In Western Law*. Here politics is conceived as ideally a reasoned argument about what kind of society a nation wishes to become along with the language and practices through which that goal can best be achieved.

This ideal of civic politics is rarely realized in full. But such a conception, seriously entertained, does shift atten-

tion away from the distribution of private goods which is foregrounded by individualist liberalism. Much as Dewey wished, a civic politics debating the common good inclines participants to see as central the issues of who is included and who excluded, and what ideals of political order are implied, by the topics of day-to-day politics.

This concern of political life far antedates the American Progressives. Dewey himself derived much of his political vision from the tradition of European philosophy stemming from Hegel. But that tradition is in its turn a recent offshoot of the civic humanism or republicanism first enunciated by the Greeks and Romans. The classical political thinkers, especially Cicero, were influential sources for the founders of the American republic. What gives the classical writers continuing importance is their grasp of politics as an active process of learning and acting together to shape a way of life in accord with justice. Many of the themes of Dewey's Progressive pragmatism appear prominently in Aristotle and Cicero, including the recognition of the tentativeness of political judgment. But the ancients did not think that politics could be made an exact science. They considered all political thinking limited by the fact that, while we strive for as much objectivity as possible, we can see only from within a particular time and situation.

For the civic tradition, certain qualities of mind are essential for seeking the common good by open deliberation. Public debate about the common good requires an understanding different from the individualistic perspectives typically developed by the strategic thinking prevalent in many aspects of contemporary life. The purpose of civic thinking is to bring the contending perspectives to an equitable and stable fulfillment by integrating them within a larger unity.

Legal and political practices lead individuals to frame their purposes within the affirmation of a larger public good for which they bear some responsibility. The terms of the discourse press the individual to recognize that the situation is complex, and that others' needs carry weight in deciding how to act. This, then, is a rhetoric of inclusion which both affirms a general consensus and allows for significant dissent from it. Public discourse over the common good, when it remembers its unfinished character, keeps open the possibility of reformulating and deepening the public understanding.

The practicability of such a politics depends upon a citizenry able to sustain such a difficult and demanding conversation. Sufficient numbers of citizens must develop and practice the requisite capacities. Character with its attendant virtues is as essential as any purely cognitive abilities. Finally, there must be institutions able to serve as

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training and practice grounds for the larger forum. Certainly in a democratic society there are a variety of such institutions, including occupational, civic and religious organizations, and democratic life requires citizens participating in all these. But no institutional sphere is more important than education.

Education For Civic Deliberation

When Walter Lippmann, in the years after *Public Opinion*, responded to his own question about how democracy is possible, he turned to the civic tradition with its notion of the common good. In *The Good Society* of the late thirties and in *Essays On The Public Philosophy* of the 1950s Lippmann spoke of the gradual discovery of a "higher law" as humanity's struggle to civilize itself. To be civilized, for Lippmann, meant what the word's Latin root had connoted to Cicero: a way of life in which individuals and nations come to regard themselves as sharing a commonwealth ordered by justice and equity. As Lippmann saw it, this project demands the capacity to see the individual self within the wider relationships on which it depends and of which it is ultimately a part. Expansive judgment of this kind is the single most important quality of mind which civic education must try to cultivate in the citizens of a democracy.

Civic deliberation depends upon judgment. But as philosophers as different as Aristotle and Kant have noted, practical judgment cannot be trained in the way technical skills can be. Because it extends to ends as well as means, practical judgment cannot proceed according to a preestablished method of solving problems. Practical judgment is more than the ability to apply a formula to certain facts. This is because how one applies a formula, indeed how one decides which general idea "fits" a given case, cannot be separated from the act of judging itself. Political judgment, as a specific kind of practical reasoning, recognizes the several concerns of the parties to a common situation and strives to find a pattern of relationships which can equitably resolve their claims.

This conception of deliberation and judgment is not widely understood today. Because practical judgment is so often seen as a matter of caprice or arbitrary power, the civic tradition, with its far richer understanding of deliberation, is a valuable educational resource in our time. The usual notion of rationality presumed in public policy discussions takes reason to be bound up with rules. Judgment, from this perspective, can be rational only when it is a matter of "operating" on some field of elements by means of clearly defined rules. The mathematical elegance of economic theory is usually the ideal held up for emulation. Political argument of any other kind is dismissed as mere camouflage for political interests which are at bottom simply assertions of power.

In sharp contrast, the writers of the civic tradition remind us that political judgment can include, but may not be limited to, so restrictive a notion of rationality. Practical judgment cannot simply subsume cases under general rules because the discrimination of cases and guiding principles is always reciprocal. For this reason the use of examples and analogies is essential and not accidental to practical reasoning. In contrast to popular "stage theories" of cognitive development, the content through which political judgment is learned cannot be separated from the "skills" of judgment which result. Training of practical judgment proceeds by leading the learner to understand why a good example is good, so that he or she can articulate reasons why it represents an excellent "solution" to a problem situation.

How then might a modern educational curriculum try to develop capacities for deliberation and political judgment? In thinking this question through with the college undergraduate curriculum in mind, it may also be possible to develop a scheme with applicability to secondary schools and to adult citizens' education. In any cases, the curriculum must begin by showing students the power of the idea of the common good.

The first course would begin with some areas of contemporary concern, particularly commonplaces of public contention. Economic competitiveness, homelessness, and liberalism versus conservatism could also serve this purpose. Any of these commonplaces could be used to observe how contemporary arguments exemplify different political theories, each with its own characteristic way of organizing the world.

Coming to understand these divergent languages and sensibilities leads naturally to the realization that each position entails beliefs about human nature and society, as the international and intercultural aspects of these controversies becomes apparent, further questions arise. Pressing these reveals that each of the contending views, like each problem, is a tradition with an often tragic history. Looked at in this perspective, our contemporary commonplaces often turn out to have long histories in which the views of both sides have been modifed through struggles with their opponents. In other cases, new technologies have abruptly confronted existing arrangements with dizzying challenges. By a kind of natural progression, then, the investigation turns out to be interdisciplinary, through in an unusual sense. The course tries to enable students to realize that the commonplace opinions they hold depend upon ideas with rhetorical, social scientific and historical dimensions.

This inquiry, carried out properly, leads to questions about the stance one should take on the contending positions and groups. Which of the contending views are good or bad, and if so, on what grounds they ought to be declared so? Should one see their conflicts as welcome or as unnecessary, as tragic or as ironic? Through these questions, philosophical and religious reflection become highly relevant to the inquiry.

The point of the course is not to "explain it all" so much as to reveal that the question of the common good is unavoidable. Raising students' awareness of conflict among ideals and traditions serves an important purpose. It provokes students to imagine some arrangement of institutions in which it would be possible to do justice to the purposes of the presently divergent parties. In approaching this question, historical analogies are very valuable in stirring constructive imagination. Thus, as the questioning of the everyday commonplaces becomes more sophisticated and intense, the intellectual inquiry may grow into the practice of civic argument itself.

The movement of the course, while inductive, would be structured by the themes and texts of the civic tradition. Serious pursuit of most contemporary controversies would enable the tradition and its texts to show their power and relevance. Each course might be organized around different issues, but all would include a common reading list, allowing for some substitutions. Most important would be the ancients: Plato, *The Republic*, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, and the quite accessible Cicero, *On Duties* and *De Re Publica*. Perhaps some medieval or modern thinkers could be included as well, partly to expand the students' repertoire and to show that the tradition itself contains divergence and argument.

Among twentieth century American thinkers, three stand out as particularly relevant: John Dewey, *Individualism Old And New* and *The Public And Its Problems;* Walter Lippman, *The Good Society* and *Essays In The Public Philosophy;* and Josiah Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty*. Making sense of these difficult but extremely rich texts in the context of a confrontation with contemporary perplexities would be a powerful intellectual experience for students and faculty alike. Faculty involved in these courses might well spend some time together reading and discussing the works and their themes.

Judgment proceeds by comparison and contrast. The first function of the texts and figures of the tradition is to provide powerful and attractive – or simply startling – comparisons. Since comparison works both ways, the second use of texts and figures is to raise the question of their applicability to the student's own situation. In this way the texts and figures of the tradition come to shape new questions about the present. Civic education means the exploration of difficult problems. Its reward is the glimpse of new possibilities opened up by the search for the common good.

The common good would be normative for this inquiry, but not as an imposition from outside. It very naturally completes the direction of any inquiry as soon as asking about why the world is as it is opens out into the deliberative question of how we should try to shape the development of this world. The relevance of the civic tradition is that it can illuminate the present by reference to the examples of the past. It aims to provoke students and teachers to question the adequacy of their understandings and beliefs, and to be open to argument from others' points of view. But this is not relativism. As the Glendon example reveals, the motive for seeking more comprehensive viewpoints is not so much a wish to compromise for the sake of peace as it is the desire to include for the sake of justice.

The tradition of civic humanism conceived in this way would be far more than just another required or elective course within an undergraduate curriculum. Rather, the themes of civic humanism could provide a coherent way to give challenge and focus to the typically diffuse and lackluster "general education" requirements. It is dubious whether the proposed inquiry could work as a single isolated course, independent of a larger purpose and context. Thus a course or seminar in each or several of the undergraduate years along with some form of mandatory essay or project as a graduation requirement would fill out this proposal. It is simply Great Books with a new twist. For faculty as well as students, reading some of the great texts in conjunction with salient controversies of their own world could open the possibility of not only intellectual excitement but serious engagement with life.

Back Page Commentary

COMING TO TERMS WITH THE MULTICULTURALISTS

Larry McGehee

An "in" phrase now is something called cultural diversity. In many ways, cultural diversity means what "cultural differences" or "pluralistic society" or "multiple viewpoints" used to mean. "Cultural diversity" recognizes that we speak from different backgrounds, the differences often being tied to differences in gender, nationality, social class, race, age, education patterns, genetics, geographical origins, family background, experiences, interests, talents, health, physical traits and appearance, dress, religious beliefs, ideologies, and opinions. Small wonder, with so many variables, that we place such national interest upon individualism. No one is a carbon of anyone else – although there are four billion (give or take a few) of us alive and sharing a common globe and moment in time.

As those who passed through the gates of Ellis Island know, much of our socialization process has been designed to make us common-denominator citizens. If we read the same things and speak the same language, the theory has been, we will become alike. The process of naturalization for children growing up and for immigrants arriving has aimed at creating out of our particularities a Universal Person. Cultural diversity believes such socialization may be both too discriminatory to be desired and too difficult to achieve. It takes equality seriously. If we are equals, then a socialization process that destroys parts of some of us may be inequitable. Cultural diversity's goal is not some abstract Ideal Person into which people are shaped by socially stretching them on a rack or lopping off their heads or feet. Its universal is enrichment of each other by the retention and sharing of differences, not by divestment of them. We can, by working hard at it, learn to like one another without becoming alike.

Garrett Barden has written a fine little book on cultural diversity, *After Principles* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1990). The problem with cultural diversity, he says, is that it does tend to disintegrate society. Given a choice between having to work hard to appreciate and live with different others without changing them and sticking to oneself and a few like oneself, the natural inclination is to retreat into ethnic or other enclaves, or into self-centeredness. In a society in which everyone seemed to be white and Protestant and in which everyone grew up reading the King James Bible, *Silas Marner*, and *Julius Ceasar*, socialization was no problem. In a society populated by so many diversities, however, common principles and common presuppositions are no longer possible.

Barden's response to the black hole left in modern society when it became clear that Western Civilization, English, and Blackstone's Commentary were minority views is quite optimistic. When he looks for commonality and social cohesion, what he finds all of us looking for and in need of is a shared "tradition". In the absence of one ultimate tradition that we can all hold to together, and in the presence of countless competing less-than-ultimate traditions to which we could go separately, Barden finds one ultimate we all share. We come from different traditions, but we have in common a "set of operations" that are ultimates in our nature.

What I understand Barden to be saying is that the foundation we all share as humans is that we are by nature dialecticians – as Plato thought us to be. We cannot live alone. We die without others. We define ourselves only by our engagement with others. We are not solitary wolf-men and wolf-women in a wilderness. Our nature and our necessity are to understand ourselves and to save and to serve ourselves. That is basic to us all. We do that by conversation – that is, by dialogue. We enter into communication with others – "community-cation" – because we must. We soon find that communication works best when it is two-way – listening as well as speaking, seeing as well as showing. We also find that communication works best when it creates images in our minds and in our feelings to which we can react.

To make communication easier, therefore, we learn the set of basic human operations that are dialogue and image-making. Dialogue requires two or more of us questioning and conversing together, making or finding images we can both see. This set of operations is the key to living together in modern society. We can use that tradition of questioning, dialogue, and imagery to create together a new tradition to replace the old ones which have disappeared, a tradition more widely shared than the partial and competing ones of our enclave pasts.

In other times, what Barden describes and prescribes would have been called morals or ethics. There is no human where there is no questioning of "What ought I to do?" There is no answer to that question except by means of searching through and with others. That is the stuff of which morality is made.

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